

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

FIREARM INJURY SURVEILLANCE THROUGH EMERGENCY ROOMS (FASTER) PROJECT

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) FASTER team is comprised of team members from two offices within the Virginia state health department. Learn more about the VDH FASTER team members below.

Office of Epidemiology

Erin Austin, MPH



FASTER Principal
Investigator

Erin is the Enhanced Surveillance Program Coordinator and oversees the use of emergency department and urgent care data for public health surveillance. She also currently serves on several workgroups for COVID-19 response at VDH and has been with the agency for almost 10 years. Her public health experience prior to joining VDH includes supporting the child fatality review and influenza surveillance programs at the Allegheny County Health Department in Pittsburgh, PA. Erin graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Richmond and a Master of Public Health from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. She lives in Richmond with her husband, two children, and their border collie.

Meredith Davis, MPH





FASTER Program
Manager

Meredith has been with VDH for 5 years and currently serves as the Enhanced Surveillance Epidemiologist. In this role, she monitors emergency department and urgent care visit data for a variety of health events, including firearm injury. Her previous experience includes public health training and curriculum development, pandemic influenza planning with local health departments in North Carolina, teaching Introduction to Public Health to undergraduate students at Shenandoah University, and serving as District Epidemiologist in the VDH Loud Fairfax Health District. Meredith is a proud alumna of Case Western Reserve University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She lives outside of Winchester with her family and new rescue pup.

Stephanie Neal, MPH



Stephanie is a data analyst on the Enhanced Surveillance team. She has been with VDH for a little over 2 years and her current role includes working with emergency department data to conduct drug overdose and firearm injury surveillance. Her prior experience includes serving as the data quality analyst on the Enhanced Surveillance team, interning with the Fairfax Health Department Office of Emergency Preparedness, and performing

	<p>drug screenings as a lab technician at a substance use treatment facility in Raleigh, NC. Stephanie is an alumna of Virginia Commonwealth University and George Washington University. She currently resides in downtown Richmond.</p>
Office of Family Health Services	
<p>Lisa Wooten, MPH, BSN, RN</p> 	<p>Lisa is the Injury and Violence Prevention Program Supervisor. Lisa has over 25 years of acute and public health registered nursing experience, primarily focused in maternal child health. She has over 20 years of integrating injury and violence prevention programs into practice, and over 15 years of leading public health teams in program development, community mobilization, grants and contract management; dissemination of best practices locally, statewide, and nationally; and strategic project coordination. She helps mentor and guide a team of Injury and Violence Prevention Program experts to conduct statewide work in reducing critical priorities from a public health approach. Lisa has a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from The University of Virginia and her Master of Public Health from Liberty University. She is a native of Richmond, and lives with her husband of 33 years. Lisa has three grown children and friends in Richmond, and loves art, travel, and all things vintage.</p>
<p>Lauren Yerkes, MPH</p> 	<p>Lauren (last name rhymes with 'circus') (she/her) is the Injury and Violence Prevention Epidemiologist. She conducts epidemiologic analyses and translates injury and violence data used to inform policy and program planning and action for seven federally funded grants. Lauren provides subject matter expertise, technical assistance, and consulting on injury and violence prevention data to internal and external stakeholders statewide. She also currently serves on several workgroups for COVID-19 response at VDH. She has eight years of epidemiology and public health experience, and prior to her current work, she was the lead HIV epidemiologist at VDH. Lauren has a Bachelor of Science in Human Development from Virginia Tech and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine. She is a native of Richmond, and lives with her husband, incredibly funny daughter, and very curious cat.</p>

Paul D. Ronca, Sr.



Paul recently came to the Injury and Violence Prevention team after a 37-year career in law enforcement. He retired as a Captain from the Richmond Police Department after serving as the Commander of 1st Precinct. He went on to become the Chief of Police in Penn Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania where he oversaw their re-accreditation process. He returned to Richmond and accepted the position as Chief of Police for J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. As the chief of Reynolds, he successfully achieved accreditation from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission becoming the first and only community college police department to receive this honor. Paul graduated from the University of Richmond. He and his wife, Karen, have been married for 37 years and have two children and one grandchild.

Elizabeth Lowery, MPH



Elizabeth (she/her) is the evaluator for the Injury and Violence Prevention program. She comes to VDH on a break from the doctoral program at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she conducted research into the public health implications of sexual violence. Her prior experience includes policy work for the Department of Health and Human Services, crime analysis with the Peace Corps, and a background in emergency preparedness with VDH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the aftermath of 9/11. She has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the College of William and Mary and a Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan. She lives in south Chesterfield with her husband, three kids, two dogs, and sometimes livestock.

VDH FASTER Team Organizational Chart

